

THE PRESS

The Atlantic Makes Waves

Gazing from a window of the *Atlantic* magazine's offices in Boston's Back Bay area recently, Writer Ward Just noticed a couple sprawled across the hood of a Volkswagen, "apparently in the final throes of making love." It was not so long ago that the height of public romance in the neighborhood was afternoon tea at the nearby Ritz Hotel. Perspectives have obviously changed on the *Atlantic's* brownstone doorstep.

Somewhat less vividly, they have also changed within the 113-year-old magazine. Long noted as a high-quality literary journal, the *Atlantic* has become less genteel and more aggressive. The change has been gradual, but it dates perceptibly from 1966, when Robert Manning became editor in chief. Says Tom Winship, editor of the *Boston Globe*: "Bob Manning, who's a modern man, has moved *Atlantic* right out of Oliver Wendell Holmes into the 20th century."

Given to tweeds and a kind of prodding impatience, Manning joined the *Atlantic* in 1964 as executive editor. He had been an Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, a senior editor at *TIME*, Sunday editor of the old New York *Herald Tribune*, and a reporter for United Press, Associated Press and his home town Binghamton (N.Y.) *Press*. When he went to *Atlantic*, he noted the danger "of having a beautiful tool without any cutting edge."

Mystique of War. Manning has not turned the *Atlantic's* back on literature. Where its pages were once filled with the contributions of Emerson, Longfellow and Thoreau, they now carry the works of Saul Bellow, James Dick-ey and Lillian Hellman. Neither has it lost its touch for literary coups. Some of the earliest fiction of Ernest Hemingway and Edwin O'Connor appeared in the *Atlantic*. In recent years it has carried the first musings of Svetlana Aliluyeva after her defection and a preview of Scientist James Watson's best-selling book, *The Double Helix*. Its pages also have offered distinctive, often distinguished reportage on current affairs—the war in Viet Nam, Women's Liberation, reform in the universities, life in a black ghetto, the trial of Dr. Spock. In its current issue, *Atlantic* begins an ambitious two-part study of the U.S. Army by Ward Just, called "Soldiers."

The first installment is not so much a portrait as a compelling kaleidoscope of sketches. With vignettes from West Point, Fort Lewis and Fort Hood ("known as Fort Head for the quantity of marijuana available and used"), Just depicts an institution at bay, its old values under siege, its pride wounded. He quotes a much-decorated career cadet on

heroism: "I remember all the movies, *Dawn Patrol*, and stuff like that. Perhaps I wanted to be a hero myself. As a sergeant, I quit counting at 127 dead. To kill a person is murder, but to kill a man in battle is honorable. It's the mystique of war. The supreme risk, see. A seven or a crap." At West Point three cadets grin when asked to name their war heroes. One says: "There aren't any heroes any more."

More Fahrenheit. To herald the first installment of "Soldiers," the *Atlantic* has its first two-page foldout cover in its 1,356-issue history, a striking collage by Larry Rivers. The cover is not the only physical innovation. Under Manning's direction, there has been more use of white space and illustrations.

Harper's, the traditional rival of the *Atlantic*, has made similar changes under its imaginative editor in chief, Willie Morris. And as each magazine continues to break away from old patterns, comparisons are made. Partly because Morris is highly visible on the New York scene and partly because *Harper's* looks more daring (lots of leg and very little miniskirt in a Women's Lib cover last February), many people in the publishing business regard *Harper's* as the "hotter" book. But if "hot" means popular with advertisers, the *Atlantic* has more Fahrenheit. Including the October issue, the *Atlantic* has carried 444 pages of ads this year, up from 381 last year; *Harper's* has run 395, down from 412. In circulation, *Harper's* leads, 379,210 to 326,347. Neither is a notable moneymaker.

Globe Editor Winship supplies a Boston view of the two: "It's a little unfair to compare them. They seem to have a different mission. *Harper's* is very lively and *au courant*. It's even going a bit kinky. The *Atlantic* still retains its heritage of civility, literary writing and careful reporting." Adds Ward Just, who has written for both magazines: "Manning hasn't sacrificed durable quality for the passions of the moment. He is not afraid to be dull at times."

Neither Manning nor new Managing Editor Michael Janeway is afraid to be controversial. Planned for *Atlantic's* December issue is an article probing the shadowy relationship between the FBI and the late Martin Luther King. Clearly, the magazine has come a long way since Ellery Sedgwick became proprietor-editor in 1908. The *Atlantic*, he determined, should be like a good dinner party, attended by interesting people with interesting conversation. Says Manning: "To duplicate the simple diet of the dinner table is no longer enough."